

PRELIMINARY AMENDMENT

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1. (original): Device for the dressing of fibrous material for further processing, in particular distributor – which is known as a hopper – for the dressing of cut tobacco in the production of cigarettes, the tobacco being introduced into the distributor and being treated within the latter by loosening up, the elimination of (tobacco) lumps and sifting, to form a tobacco strand, with the aid of a metering system (12), **characterized** in that the tobacco can be conducted through one or more sifters (15) for the separation of constituents (29) having a higher dead weight, such as foreign bodies, ribs and stalks, the sifter or sifters (15) preceding the metering system (12) in the direction of movement of the tobacco.

2. (original): Device according to Claim 1, **characterized** in that at least one sifter (15) precedes the distributor in the direction of movement of the tobacco, in particular as a separate member outside the distributor, the supplied tobacco preferably being capable of being conducted through the sifter (15) completely, in such a way that (solely) tobacco treated by sifting can be introduced into the distributor.

3. (currently amended): Device according to Claim 1 ~~or 2~~, **characterized** in that the sifter or sifters is or are designed with zigzag-shaped flow ducts or sifting ducts (23, 56) for tobacco, on the one hand, and for air, on the other hand, preferably in the version as a cone-type sifter or as a zigzag sifter.

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4. (currently amended): Device according to Claim 2-~~or 3~~, **characterized** in that the sifter (15), preferably designed as a cone-type sifter, is arranged in a separate sifter housing (16) and is connected to the distributor to form an apparatus unit, preferably on a common machine stand (18).

5. (currently amended): Device according to Claim 2-~~or one of the further claims~~4, **characterized** in that the tobacco can be supplied to the sifter (15) via a supply line (19) issuing, in particular, vertically and centrally in the sifter (15), the treated tobacco being capable of being introduced from the sifter housing (16) directly into the distributor, in particular by means of a horizontal connecting pipe or a connecting line (20) which issues in the region of a lock (10) in the distributor.

6. (currently amended): Device according to Claim 3-~~or one of the further claims~~, **characterized** in that the cone-type sifter (15) is arranged in an, in particular, cylindrical sifter housing (16), an upright guide body (21) in the form of a cone, in particular in the geometrical form of two double cones arranged one above the other, being arranged centrally within the sifter housing (16), and, furthermore, the guide body being surrounded by a guide wall (22) of circular cross section which runs at a distance from an outer surface area of the guide body (21) and which forms with the guide body (21) a wavy or zigzag-shaped sifting duct (23).

7. (currently amended): Device according to Claim 6-~~or one of the further claims~~, **characterized** in that the oncoming tobacco can be introduced into the sifter (15) or cone-type sifter via an upright or vertical supply line (19) centrally above the guide body (21), upwardly flowing air supplied from below guiding the tobacco into the region of a collecting space formed

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above the guide body (21), to be precise into a collecting chamber (31), from which tobacco can be supplied to the distributor or to a predistributor (11) via a connecting line.

8. (currently amended): Device according to Claim 1 ~~or one of the further claims~~, **characterized** in that tobacco, if appropriate after sifting, can be introduced via a connecting line or via a supply line (49) into a lock (10) formed in the upper region of the distributor and can be supplied from the lock (10) to the predistributor (11) formed below the said lock, the tobacco emerging from the predistributor (11) being capable of being supplied to a sifter (15) arranged within the distributor or to the metering system (12).

9. (currently amended): Device according to Claim 1 ~~or one of the further claims~~, 7, **characterized** in that the predistributor (11) consists of a plurality of, to be precise, in particular, three spiked rollers (35, 36, 37), of which two spiked rollers (36, 37) are arranged axially parallel next to one another and are in mutual engagement, whilst the third spiked roller (35) is mounted above the two spiked rollers (36, 37) and so as to be offset with respect to the tobacco stream.

10. (currently amended): Device according to Claim 1 ~~or one of the further claims~~, 7, **characterized** in that the sifter (15) arranged within the distributor has an upright, preferably zigzag-shaped sifting duct (56) which is defined by guidance walls (57, 58) running at a distance from one another, the tobacco being capable of being supplied to the sifter in the upper region of the sifting duct (56), downstream of the predistributor (11), by means of a tobacco conveyor, in particular by means of a cross conveyor (50) or by means of an upward conveyor (68).

11. (currently amended): Device according to Claim 10 ~~or one of the further claims~~, **characterized** in that the sifting duct (56) is followed, in particular at the lower end, by an air

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duct (62) through which air can be conducted into the sifting duct (56), the air in the air duct (62) being generated by an air source, in particular by a fan.

12. (currently amended): Device according to Claim 11 ~~or one of the further claims~~, **characterized** in that the, in particular, upright air duct (62) follows, with an upper region, an upper end of the sifting duct (56), in such a way that the sifting duct (56) and the air duct (62) form a closed flow circulation system.

13. (currently amended): Device according to Claim 11 ~~or one of the further claims~~, **characterized** in that the tobacco conveyed upwards by the air in the sifting duct (56) can be deflected, in particular in a deflecting duct (59) which follows the sifting duct (56) and which supplies the tobacco stream (60) to the metering system (12) in a downwardly directed movement.

14. (original): Device according to Claim 13, **characterized** in that, in the region of the deflecting duct (59), an air-permeable guide member, in particular an air-permeable drum (64) driven in rotation, via which air can be sucked in by the fan (61) in the air duct (62), is mounted.

15. (currently amended): Device according to Claim 1 ~~or one of the further claims~~, **characterized** in that, from a tobacco stream supplied to a sifter (15), a part-stream can be diverted by means of blast air, in particular by means of a transversely directed air nozzle (77) which is arranged in a transport well (70) of the tobacco and which guides part of the tobacco into a branch duct (78) or the like.